

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. It is not in the public interest if they air a program that is completely one-sided. (Yes, they have invited John Kerry to appear on air after the program is aired, but this is tantamount to inviting him to his own lynching, given that they will surely retain control of the formatting, editing, etc. of any commentary he might provide, and cannot be trusted to be even-handed in formatting, editing, etc. given that Sinclair's political contributions almost uniformly go to Republicans. Any viewing of Sinclair's "news commentaries" by Mark Hyman should disabuse anyone of the notion that this broadcasting group is capable of being fair to anyone other than conservatives.)

This situation is clearly a result of media consolidation. When large companies control the airwaves, we get programming that suits the tastes of rich monopolists, rather than programming that serves local communities with local concerns and a desire for more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.